

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 051660
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 051660

FROM AMBASSADOR DEVINE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINT, SHUM, ES

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF AMBASSADOR'S SECURITY WITH
FOREIGN MINISTRY AND PRESIDENT

1. AFTER I HAD ARRANGED TO CALL ON VICE FOREIGN MINISTER MENDOZA ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, MY LAST WORK DAY BEFORE PROCEEDING TO ARA CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, I WAS INVITED TO VISIT PRESIDENT ROMERO LATER THAT SAME AFTERNOON. IN BOTH CONVERSATIONS, PURSUANT TO SUGGESTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT, I RAISED THE PROBLEM OF MY PERSONAL SECURITY.

2. AS THE PRESIDENT WELL KNEW, I SAID, SAN SALVADOR IS RIFE WITH RUMORS AND REPORTS WHICH ARE NOT EASILY SUSCEPTIBLE OF VERIFICATION. AT THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE FROM US IN OCTOBER, WE HAD RECEIVED REPORTS OF RIGHTIST PLANS, POSSIBLY INVOLVING SOME ELEMENTS OF SECURITY
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PAGE 02 STATE 051660

FORCES, TO ASSASSINATE ME UPON ARRIVAL IN SAN SALVADOR OR SOON THEREAFTER. SUPPOSED MOTIVATIONS WERE: (1) FOR SOME PLOTTERS, TO CAUSE TROUBLES BETWEEN ROMERO ADMINISTRATION AND USG; AND (2) FOR OTHERS, TO PLACE BLAME FOR SUCH ACTION ON POLITICAL LEFT AND THUS DEMONSTRATE TO USG NEED FOR REVISED HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY MORE TOLERANT OF REPRESSIVE ACTION. BUT SINCE MY ARRIVAL HERE,

I TOLD THE PRESIDENT, OTHER INFORMATION REACHING US HAS INDICATED THAT EXTREMIST FORCES OF THE POLITICAL LEFT HAVE FOR THEIR PART CONCLUDED THAT MY KIDNAPPING AND USE AS A HOSTAGE WOULD PROVIDE GREATEST POSSIBLE LEVERAGE TO USE AGAINST ROMERO ADMINISTRATION FOR RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

3. I SAID THAT WE COULD NOT IGNORE THESE REPORTS AND THAT THEY SEEMED TO POSE A SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS THREAT SO THAT DEPARTMENT HAD SENT SPECIAL SY DETAIL WITH ME TO EL SALVADOR. THESE PERSONNEL WERE STILL HERE.

4. WHEN I POINTED OUT THAT SAFETY OF ASSIGNED AMBASSADORS IS RESPONSIBILITY OF HOST GOVERNMENT, PRESIDENT ROMERO READILY AGREED. IN DISCUSSING LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION, HOWEVER, HE AND I BOTH RECOGNIZED THAT DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN GENERAL HAS BEEN UNNERVED BY PAST YEAR'S ASSASSINATIONS AND KIDNAPPINGS OF PROMINENT FIGURES UP TO AND INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER BORGONOVO. ANY PROTECTIVE DETAIL PROVIDED ONE AMBASSADOR WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE DEMANDED BY THEM ALL, A TASK CLEARLY BEYOND CAPABILITIES OF GOES.

5. PRESIDENT ROMERO SAID THAT SY DETAIL WAS ENTIRELY WELCOME TO STAY ON IN EL SALVADOR. IT WAS, IN EFFECT, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 STATE 051660

DOING A TASK WHICH CORRESPONDED TO GOES BUT WAS BEYOND ITS CAPABILITIES. SHOULD SY DETAIL NEED REINFORCEMENT UPON ANY SPECIFIC OCCASION OF INCREASED THREAT, THIS WOULD BE PROVIDED.

6. WHEN I VOICED REGRET AT HAVING TO SPEAK TO PRESIDENT IN THESE TERMS ON THIS SUBJECT, HE SAID NOT TO WORRY ABOUT IT AND THAT WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO EACH OTHER IN THIS WAY, FRANKLY AND SERIOUSLY, ON ANY PROBLEM WHICH MIGHT COME UP. VANCE

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